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BAPTISTS

SBC's Page: beware power of enemy

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

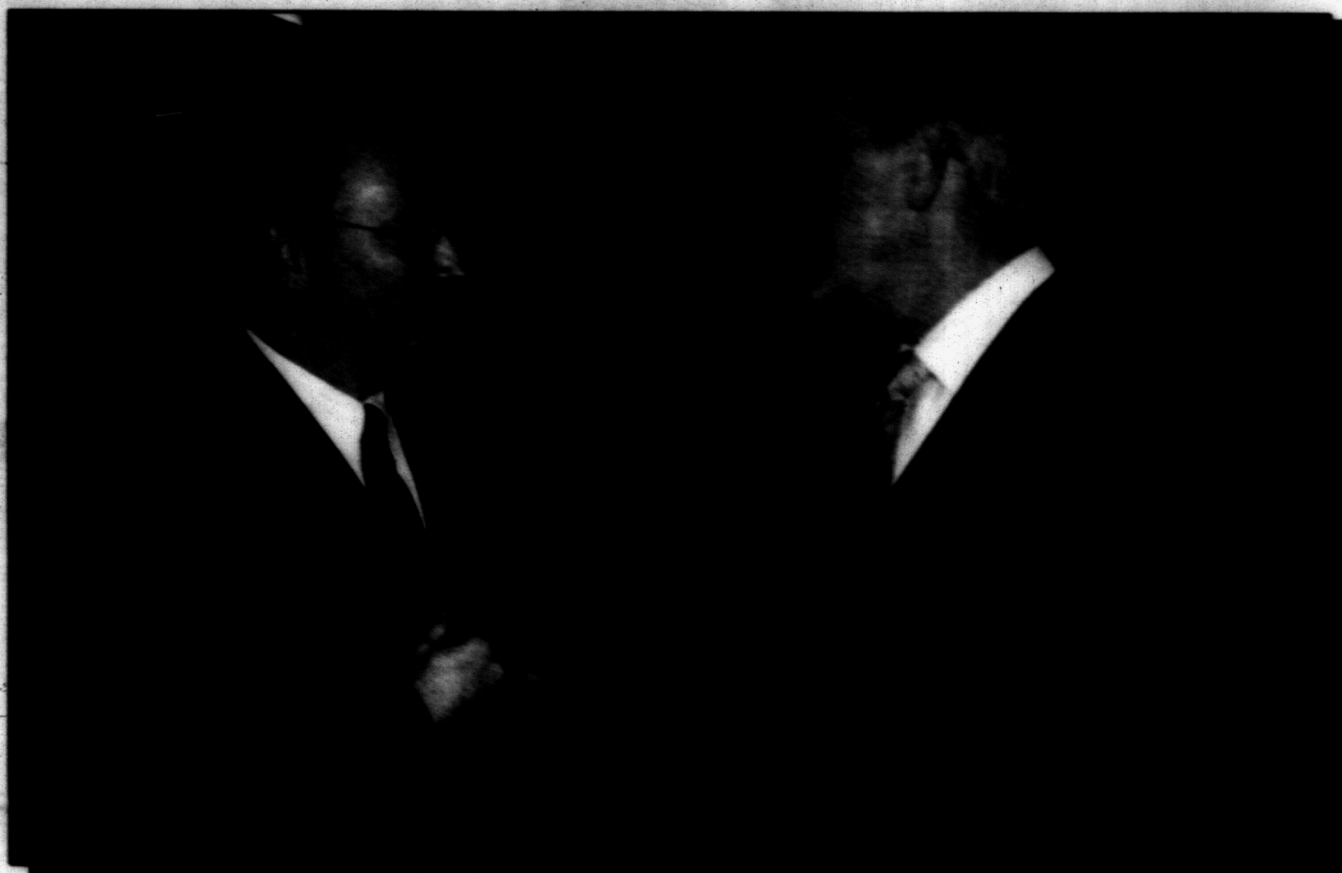
Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Frank Page warned attendees at the Golden Triangle Association annual meeting on October 17 at First Church, Starkville, not to underestimate the power of the enemy of the Gospel as Southern Baptists seek to revive themselves.

Quoting the words of Jesus in John 10:10 — "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full (NIV)" — Page described how Satan has "stolen power from our hearts; from our churches he has stolen unity," and asked, "Has he not destroyed the vision of many churches?"

Page said he fears Southern Baptists have "thwarted the prayer of Jesus," as recorded in John 17.

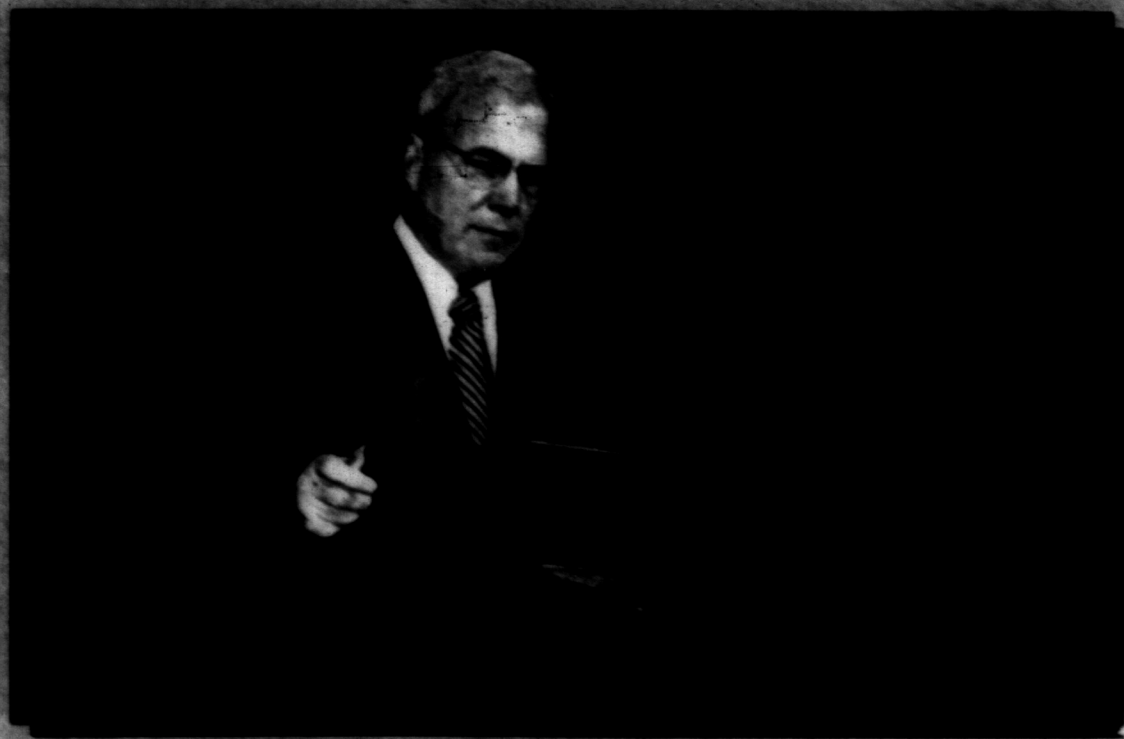
"Across the SBC, I see factions growing so deep. I see people breaking into groups. When they're not speaking, it's not right," he said.

Page said secular politicians have clamored to visit with him since his election in June to the presidency of the Southern



PRESIDENTIAL VISIT — Ronnie Hatfield (left), pastor of Meadowview Church, Starkville, and moderator of Golden Triangle Association, talks with Frank Page, pastor of First Church, Taylors, S.C., and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, on October 17 after adjournment of the association's annual meeting at First Church, Starkville. Page was the keynote speaker for the meeting. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

MBC convenes Oct. 31



SESSION BEGINS — Clarence Cooper, president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC), gavels to order the 171st annual session of the convention on October 31 at First Church, Jackson. Complete reports from the annual session will be published in the November 9 issue of The Baptist Record. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Baptist Convention. Potential U.S. presidential candidates John Kerry, a senator from Massachusetts;

Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, a former Southern Baptist pastor; and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani have contacted him personally. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton is among others who have also called on him, Page said.

When the non-Southern Baptists asked him what the SBC is all about, "I told them we're about a personal, passionate, loving relationship with Jesus Christ," he recounted.

Page also said he is calling on Southern Baptists to "beg God for revival."

"Revival doesn't come from manufactured devotionals. It comes from the sovereign God," he stressed.

Page was elected SBC president in a tight, three-man race last June at the Southern Baptist Convention in Greensboro, N.C. He defeated Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, Ar., and Jerry Sutton, pastor of Two Rivers Church in Nashville.

Page has pointed out on numerous occasions that he believes his election was a referendum on the future of the Cooperative Program. Page's

church gave over 12% of undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program in 2005, while Floyd's church gave about one-quarter of one percent and Sutton's church gave nothing.

Bill Duncan, interim missions director for Golden Triangle Association, said the association was honored to have Page speak at their annual meeting.

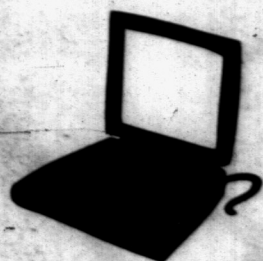
"We were very pleased to host the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, who stirred our interest in the SBC and gave us a positive message concerning the Cooperative Program. Dr. Page is such a refreshing personality," Duncan said.

Ronnie Hatfield, pastor of Meadowview Church, Starkville, and Golden Triangle Association moderator, said, "It was a blessing to see Dr. Page's heart and to hear his theme of transformation."

"The morning after our annual meeting, he took time to meet with pastors at Calvary Church in West Point and answer their questions. He is so busy as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, but he took time to come to our annual meeting and then meet with pastors and get 'eye-level' with us. He really listened to us."

"Dr. Page has strength, and he has humility."

Golden Triangle Association was formed nine years ago at First Church, Starkville, by the churches of Lowndes, Oktibbeha, and Clay Counties. The association is currently headquartered in Columbus.



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The Third Effect



Modern American politics is in a mess, isn't it? The sensationalized rhetoric and histrionic mudslinging of today probably matches (or exceeds) the dirty politics of bygone eras. An astute follower of politics once observed, "You can't govern if you don't win," but the win-at-any-cost mentality of today has become a dangerous drain on our national vitality.

Pundits frequently speculate on the reasons why this mental cruelty is heaped upon us every two years or so. The main reason seems to be that it works. Twisting the truth and distorting reality have an impact on many voters, apparently in three ways.

The First Effect negative campaigning has is to embolden the hardcore supporters of the candidate making the attacks to support their candidate even more passionately, because their opponent looks like such a bad person. The Second Effect is to discourage supporters of the other candidate, in hopes they will drop away from the campaign. The Third Effect is to create disgust among uncommitted voters in general in the hope that they will be repulsed by the mudslinging and just stay home on Election Day.

The Third Effect seems to be the most important and sought-after, because if uncommitted voters simply stay away from the polls, the attacking candidate has an opportunity to get his/her hardcore supporters to the polls and win the election. This is especially true in an election cycle the one we are currently undergoing.

Almost every crucial race in the country is up for grabs. Many of the races that will decide which political party controls the reins of government for the next two years are within pollsters' margins of error. The Republicans want very much to hold on to power, and Democrats want very much to regain the power they once enjoyed.

Given the publicly-stated positions and intentions of the two parties, it's not an overstatement to describe the upcoming November 7 elections as utterly crucial to the future of our nation. Never have the differences between the two competing national parties been clearer. The lines separating the parties have never been brighter. The voters should be fired up like never before to march to the polls and cast a definitive vote.

That's where the Third Effect comes in to play. If only that huge middle of uncommitted voters can be driven away

from the polls by discouraging news and unbridled mudslinging, the party faithful will have the chance to swing the election their way. The strategy is, if only the people with no political ax to grind can be kept from voting, an election can be won.

A voter can expect that type of behavior from unscrupulous candidates but the national news media, which have already proven themselves so untrustworthy in so many other ways, have pulled out all the stops in utilizing the Third Effect to sway this election. Just about every newspaper, every radio and television station, every cable news program, every politically-active Hollywood star has exploited the Third Effect in this election cycle.

They don't want us to vote — especially, they don't want Christians to vote. They know the impact we have had on other recent elections, and they'd prefer we sit this one out. That seems to be the new tactic for dealing with Christian and "values" voters: beat them down with so much bad news and dirty insinuations that they'll just stay home on Election Day.

True enough, politicians have failed Christians in the past. They have courted us, used the proper code words, spoken to us of their deep faith, and then failed us. That will undoubtedly happen again.

We still must vote, even when the Third Effect is heaped upon us. If we care about the future of this country, we will make it to the polls on November 7 and we will vote. Not to do so is to give up on this great country, a gift from God Himself.

That should be all the reason we need to do what's right.

(First of a two-part series)

Since February 1975, when God led me to establish the Jerry Drace Evangelistic Association, He has allowed me to preach in more than 1,000 churches across our nation. In His divine providence He has placed me in the company of some of His choicest servants as well as some who seek to be served.

Throughout the past 31 years I have kept notes and observations on each of the pastors, staffs, and churches where my team and I have been privileged to present the claims of Christ. I am sure some of these observations will be misunderstood; others will be embraced. I wish to share only 13 in hopes they will serve as a catalyst for your own reflections:

- I have observed the lowering of the standards of holiness from the pulpit to the pew. It appears we are seeking to develop happy churches, but not holy churches. One pastor stated that he wanted his people to leave the Sunday morning worship feeling "affirmed, approved, and applauded." Whatever happened to leaving feeling confronted, convicted, confessed, and cleansed?

Spurgeon put it in perspective years ago when he said, "Of all the griefs the church ever feels, the keenest is when those who once stood in her midst dishonor the name of Christ by unholy living."

GUEST OPINION:



Observations from three decades

By Jerry Drace, evangelist
Jackson, Tn.

- I have observed the seductive fashions of the world being worn in the worship centers of our churches. Teenage girls and sometimes their mothers wear clothes to church they neither could wear to school nor in the workplace. The same applies to the male gender.

We have developed such a laxity in our attire that the result has numbed the spiritual senses of being in the presence of Deity. I am fully aware that God looks on the heart, but clothing (or the lack thereof) should not distract from looking into His face.

- I have observed more and more churches having fewer and fewer revivals. Of course, the rural church will always hold a revival — whether they actually have one or not — the third week of August. Vance Havner once said, "Preachers speak of 'holding revivals'. Somebody ought to turn one loose!"

Real revival, which takes prayer and preparation and

sees scores ushered into the Kingdom and church members rekindling the fire within, is quickly giving way to one-day events. We have stopped singing Take Time To Be Holy, because we don't have the time.

- I have observed more and more churches decreasing from mortification rather than increasing due to salvation. There is more life outside in most church cemeteries than inside on the pews. At least in the cemeteries the grass grows and the flowers bloom.

If there is not a revival in our land, many of our rural churches will become bed and breakfast inns and our larger churches will be turned into antique malls. If you don't believe this, visit Great Britain.

- I have observed more and more churches growing by transferring letters rather than transforming lives. It doesn't take a genius to build a church numerically. Given the right staff and

programs, you can fill a church. However, there is an eternal difference between filling a church with people and filling the people inside the church.

- I have observed more and more pastors and evangelists preaching someone else's sermons rather than studying and preaching their own. The call to preach has been replaced with the desire to succeed. Being an expounder of the Word requires time alone with God. Being a mouth for God to the people of God is an awesome responsibility.

Preaching someone else's anointed sermon doesn't guarantee your anointment. If the sermon isn't gathered and set ablaze in the pastor's heart it likely won't spread to the hearts of the church members. Some of the greatest proclaimers of the Good News are seldom heard because they neither pastor a mega church nor are the featured speakers on Christian cruises.

Drace, whose commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press, is a vocational evangelist and past president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists. In addition to revivals and area wide crusades, he and his wife Becky conduct Hope for the Home conferences. For more information, visit www.jdea.tn.org and www.HopefortheHome.org.

The second and final installment of Drace's commentary will appear in the November 9 issue of The Baptist Record.

Kenya kidnapping ordeal brings God closer

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Mendy Nantz was on the way to a funeral when it happened. "Don't scream or do anything stupid or I will kill you," a well-dressed man commanded the 33-year-old Southern Baptist missionary.

Idling outside the Africa Inland Mission counseling center in Nairobi, Kenya, Nantz had spent the past few minutes honking the horn of her red Toyota RAV-4. She was waiting for someone to open the steel gate that protected the compound's entrance.

Instead of a friendly wave, Nantz was greeted by the barrel of a gun. She was being kidnapped.

As the man shoved her into the RAV's passenger seat, she managed to hit the horn one last time. "That was stupid," he snarled, throwing the Toyota into reverse.

Immediately, Nantz began to pray. "Lord, do not let that honk be in vain," she cried out, silently.

Within seconds, the RAV's back doors flew open and two more men jumped in, both carrying guns. "I was trembling," Nantz recalled. "I started thinking, 'This is the end — how do I want to end my life? Do I want to end my life praising God? Or do I want to end my life in fear?' I had guns on me all the time. I couldn't cry, I couldn't scream for fear they would shoot, but I could pray," she said.

As the SUV sped away from the compound, the gunmen demanded money and began to rifle through Nantz's belongings. Minutes later, the Toyota pulled off the main road, and Nantz started to panic.

"I began to imagine all the horrific things these men could do to me," she said. "I had nothing else to give them. I began to pray specifically, 'Lord, You are my King and my God. You are in control of all situations. Please do not let them touch my body in any way.'"

Nantz considered what she would do if the men tried to rape her. She was ready to kill them — or herself — to prevent it.

"It was right then that an overwhelming peace came over my soul," Nantz said. "Even though I think I know what I can and can't live through, God knows better than I do."

Abruptly the RAV came to a stop. Nantz knew they were near the Langata cemetery, an isolated area of Nairobi. If her kidnappers were going hurt her, it would be here. The Toyota's doors opened, but no one got out. Seconds passed sluggishly, and the uncertainty was agonizing. What were her kidnappers waiting for? She continued to pray.

Suddenly the doors slammed shut, and the RAV rumbled to life. They were heading back to the main road. "I really believe

the Lord convicted their hearts of their wicked ways and spoke to them," Nantz said. "I don't know if it was a vision. I don't know if it was angels. I don't know if He spoke words to them that they heard. But it was the Lord."

Her thoughts now turned to the prospect of escape. "I knew the Lord was in control; I just needed to be aware of when He was going to allow me an exit from the situation," she said.

"I decided that if nothing else I could at least fill the entire RAV with the name of Jesus," Nantz said. "I'm a believer that if you speak it out and you speak it boldly, His name is powerful enough to change any situation, any circumstance... because the enemy cannot stand the name of Jesus. He hates it."

"We are Islam," the driver responded. Once again Nantz was overwhelmed with calmness. Noticing her Bible stuck between the seats, she grabbed it and held it tightly against her heart.

The RAV was now rolling down a long, dirt alley, heading toward a large, red gate. Another wave of fear began to grip her. "Once I'm in there, I'm lost forever," Nantz remembers thinking. "I thought this was the end of my life."

Stopping short of the gate, the gunmen exited the Toyota and forced Nantz behind the wheel. All three guns were trained on her. "Drive!" the group's leader ordered.

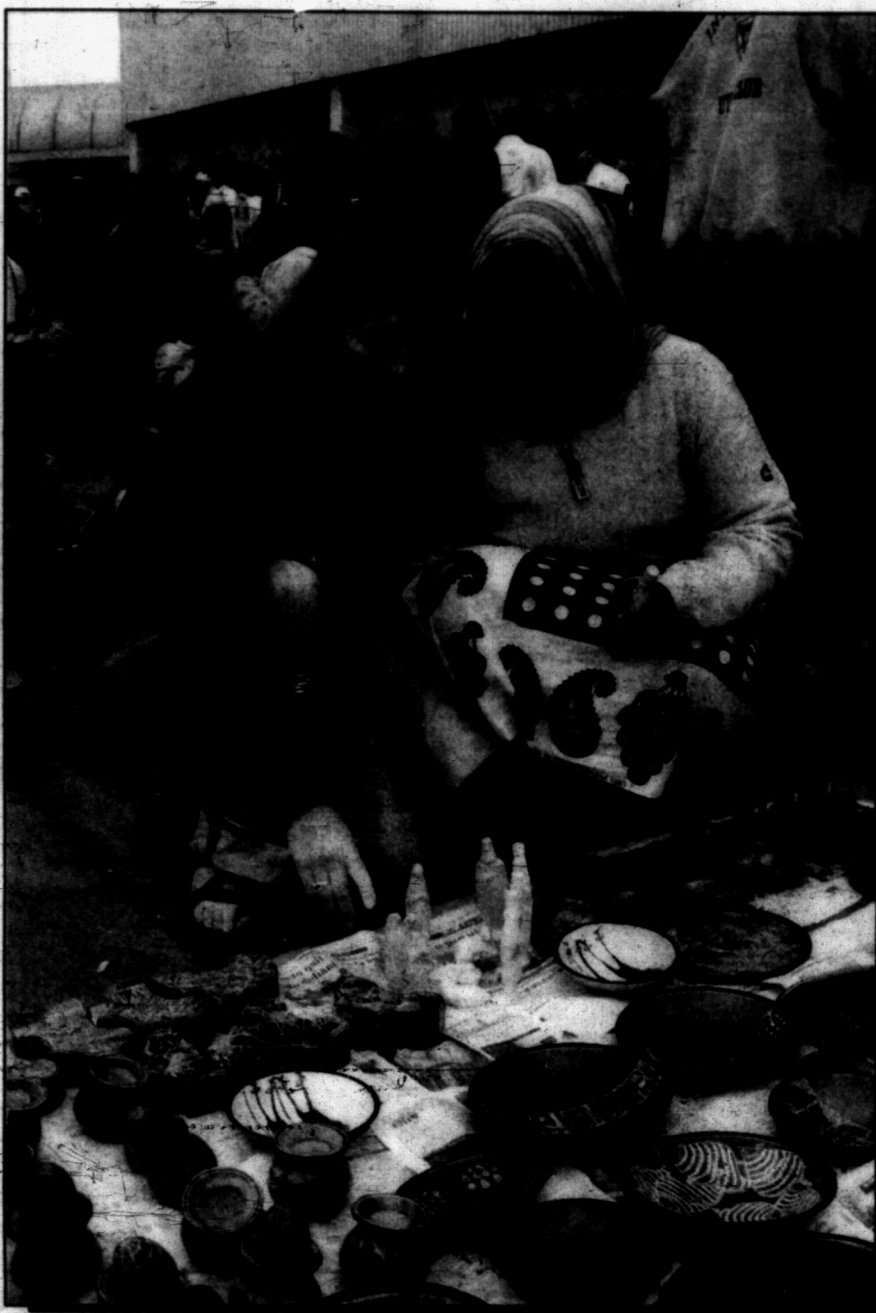
Months after her kidnapping, Nantz said it's evident the Lord was at work throughout her ordeal, beginning the moment she was taken.

Remember that final, defiant honk she prayed wouldn't be in vain? It wasn't. A neighbor heard the RAV's horn and came to the window just in time to see the gunmen jump in and speed away. The neighbor immediately informed Nantz's friends, who put out the alert she had been kidnapped.

Within 10 minutes of the kidnapping, a prayer chain was mobilized. Literally hundreds of people, some scattered around the world, were on their knees, interceding on Nantz's behalf. She credits those prayers for saving her life — and her purity — during those terrifying moments near the Langata cemetery.

"I believe that's why I had the overwhelming peace; I believe that's why they started the car and shut the doors," Nantz said. "I don't know what these gunmen saw or felt at that very moment, but I do know they had evil intentions and were stopped by the power of intercessory prayer."

"I didn't realize that when I prayed for them not to touch my body, they didn't touch anything on my body — nothing. When we pray, 'Lord, keep me from a situation,' or, 'Lord, bless me in this way,' He's literal about it."



STRONGER FAITH — Southern Baptist missionary Mendy Nantz (left) talks with an unidentified vendor in an open-air market in Nairobi, Kenya. Nantz said she's more cautious in public places since she was kidnapped earlier this year but adds the incident has only strengthened her faith and her commitment to missions. (BP photo)

"I was thinking purity-wise, 'Keep them from harming me,' and He answered, 'Mendy, I can do so much better. I can keep them from touching you anywhere — from laying a finger on you.' That's amazing to me."

"When you think of Southern Baptist women, the faithful ones, they're prayer warriors," she said. "They get down on their knees, and they pray daily for their missionaries, their families, their church, their pastors."

Looking back

10 years ago

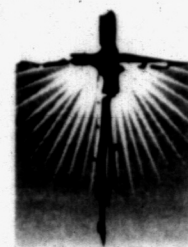
Messengers to the 161st Mississippi Baptist Convention in Jackson approve sweeping changes in the relationship between the state convention and its institutions and unanimously approve a record \$24.1 million state Cooperative Program budget for 1997.

20 years ago

RAs from First Church, Amory, continue to be one of the most active RA units in Mississippi, working in the Amory Food Bank, helping distribute Bibles during a mission trip to Memphis, and providing labor for development of Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko.

60 years ago

Mr. and Mrs. R.E.L. Polk, two of the surviving charter members of Phalti Church in Jefferson Davis County, receive special recognition from the church for giving the largest single gift in the history of the church, to be used for total replacement of worn pews in the sanctuary.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

**THE SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

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CHURCH-ACQUIRED INFECTIONS

All across our land, hospital-acquired infections have been and are a serious problem. In fact, every year over 90,000 people die from infections that are acquired while being in the hospital. That number is larger than the combined total deaths from several of our high profile diseases. What makes it even worse than just the pure numbers is the fact that all of these people went to the hospital to get help, to get well, and for their life to improve, only to succumb to an infection that was worse than the one for which they went to the hospital to get help. That is terrible! Since we are battling the unseen, unknown germs, and creepy little bacteria, how do we know what to do, where to go, what to touch, or what we should drink?

I could only wish that the infection problems were confined to hospitals, but if the truth be known many people have gone to church to find help, direction, cleansing, healing, and all of the things that God has in store for us — only to find they have been infected with a new strain of bacteria. People come with anticipation and a certain amount of expectation that because they are in church things will be better, but you can pick up infections at church. I am not talking about the kind that lurks around doorknobs and multiplies in public restrooms. No, I am talk-



Directi^os

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

ing about the kind that sometimes can even do greater damage. It begins to eat away at your soul and spirit.

You can pick up a **critical bug** at church. Maybe you are in Sunday School or in choir and you overhear some folks talking with that kind of acid speech that you know is meant to be poured on someone else. Sometimes your spiritual immune system is able to fight it off and even then you realize that someone else may be hurt.

Sometimes you can pick up a **don't care germ** at church. They are not going to pull you in and harness you up to work. You don't have to do that. Let them get someone else. You just don't care about that particular area of ministry. The problem is that when that bacterium hits it slowly and on occasion quickly migrates into areas of your soul. You become less and less willing to be involved in the things of God. It is not a flesh-eating bacterium, but it is a spirit-destroying germ. Some people never recover from it.

What can possibly be done about acquired infections whether in the hospital or in the church? Well, as simple as it sounds, there are two significant things you can do. **One, stay clean, and two, stay away from infections.** Get this picture. It is a hospital room with an adjoining bath and there are several things that are highlighted in color. What would you say is the most dangerous thing in a hospital room in relationship to acquiring infections: (1) the doorknob, (2) the toilet lever, (3) the food tray, or (4) the remote control for the TV? In reality all four have the potential of spreading infection, but the biggest culprit is number four, the remote control. Everyone picks it up and seldom does anyone ever clean or disinfect it. So when you are in the hospital you need to take precautions to watch out for those things and not spread the germs that other folks have spread.

In church it is a different thing. Do you develop a system of avoiding some people,

meetings, and places? Do you avoid church altogether? That is what some folks have done. That is not healthy either. Another thing is when you are around folks that are spreading infections you need to recognize it, keep a safe distance, and call attention to the fact that it would probably be best if they would not do that. It is even more important to stay clean in the church. You do not have to get involved in those things that spread infections.

Through the years it has been an interesting study to me to notice that anytime there is something unhealthy, unsavory, or infectious happening, some of the same people seem to be involved in the experience. You do not have to cast your lot with them on every occasion. Now I understand that you can get sick in church or out of church, in the hospital or out of the hospital, and you have no clue as to where you caught the bug. On the other hand I have also noticed that the people who stay the strongest, the healthiest, and in fact, the most useful are those people who stay cleaned-up because they stay close to Jesus, who is able to keep our immune system up and the germ count down.

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

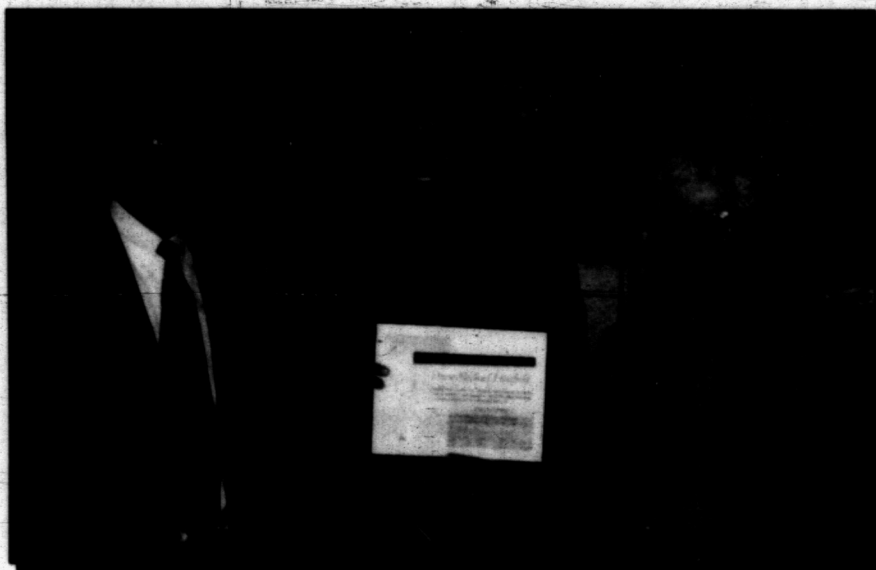
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Smith Ordained, Calvary Church, Vicksburg



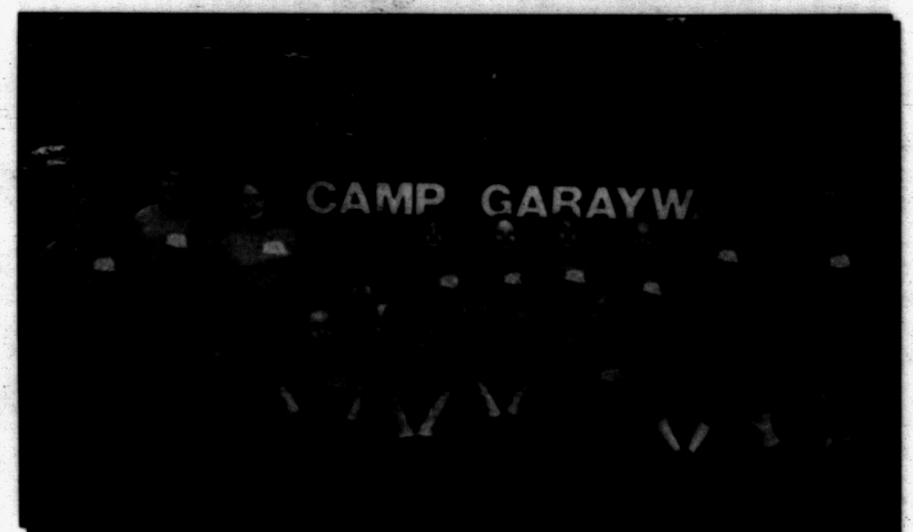
2. Montana Mission Trip, First Church, Terry

1. **First Church, Clara,** recently ordained Drew Holifield as deacon. Shown are Tim Glaze, Holifield, and Wendell Moody.

2. **First Church, Terry,** recently had a group of 16 volunteers participate in a partnership mission with the Metro Association, working in Lakeside, Mont., building a church and in Columbia Falls, Mont., repairing the roof of a local pastor. Shown are John Pace, Jr., Fay Fife, John Freels, John Gordon,

Joni and Terry Griffin, Patti and Chuck Higdon, Colleen and Steve Little, Bob Marble, Yvonne Osborn, Connie Richardson, and Corey Spooner.

3. The Girls in Action of **Fredonia Church, New Albany,** went to Mother-Daughter Camp at Camp Garaywa Oct. 20-21. The girls enjoyed meeting two missionaries, doing crafts, playing games, singing, and meeting new friends. Shown are the participants.

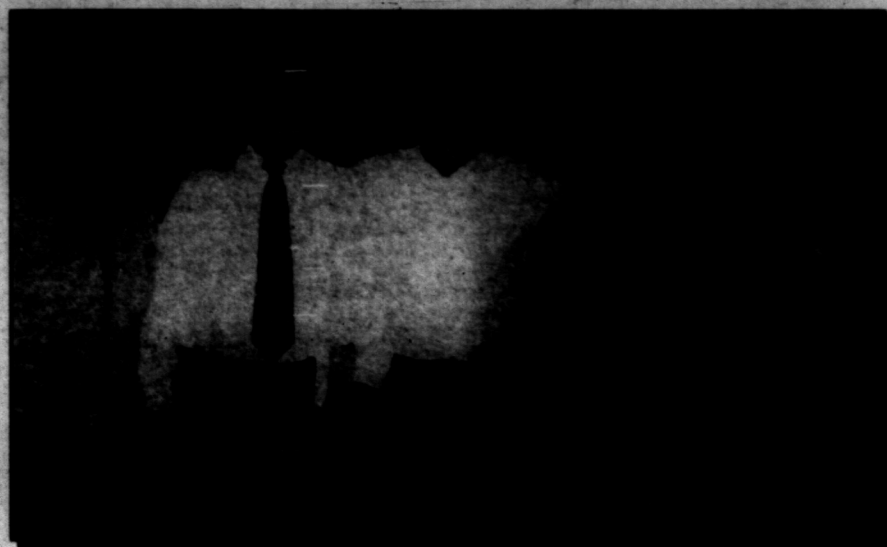


3. GAs, Fredonia Church, New Albany

JUST FOR THE RECORD



4. Stuart Ordained, Springfield Church, Morton



5. Deacon Ordination, Highland Church, Natchez

4. **Springfield Church, Morton**, recently ordained Doug Stuart as deacon. Shown are interim pastor Keith Gordon, Stuart, and Danny Wade.
5. **Highland Church, Natchez**, ordained Danny Blake and Ricky Hicks as deacons Oct. 15. Shown are Blake, Linda Blake, Paul Southerland, Hicks, and Julie Hicks.

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MS POSITIONS

TRACE RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH, Ridgeland, Miss., is accepting resumes for pastor. Send resume to Trace Ridge Baptist Church, Helen Barber chairperson, P.O. Box 2726, Ridgeland, MS 39158, no emails please.

EAST PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST CHURCH in Philadelphia, Miss., is seeking a student/youth minister. Seminary degree preferred. If interested, please send resume to mcheatham@choctaw.org or call Mark Cheatham at (601) 650-9271.

MURPHY CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH, Louisville, Miss., is seeking a part-time youth director. Please send resume and references to Murphy Creek Baptist Church, Attn: Youth Director Search Committee, 5420 Bond Rd., Louisville, MS 39339.

NORTHCREST, MERIDIAN MISS. accepting resumes for a Minister of youth. Send to Northcrest Baptist Church, P.O. Box 3159, Meridian, MS 39303.

HARRISBURG BAPTIST CHURCH, Tupelo, Miss., seeks a full-time Director of childhood education. Prefer semi-

nary-trained with large church Sunday School and children's worship experience. Send resumes to Gary Waters, 506 Lake Park Drive, Tupelo, MS 38801.

FBC TERRY, MISS., IS ACCEPTING applications for full-time church administrative secretary. Responsible for oversight of church office and financial secretary tasks. Job description and application available from church (601) 878-5735. To apply, fill out job application and send with current resume and references to FBC Terry, personnel committee, P.O. Box 159, Terry, MS 39170.

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PILGRIMS REST BAPTIST CHURCH, Crystal Springs, Miss., bi-vocational Music Minister position and bi-vocational Youth Minister position. Contact Rev. Johnnie Stewart for more info at (601) 892-3208 or (601) 892-4772.

Bibliocipher

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UAK EWNLN UANFW-
PHAY NUHK LAXT XRWS,
XRWQ XRUX UPW
FRTOW AWWK ATX U
CRQNHUUA; VLX XRWQ
XRUX UPW NHIM.

OLMW JHZW: XRHPXQ-
TAW

Clue: U = A

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Ezra Seven: Ten.

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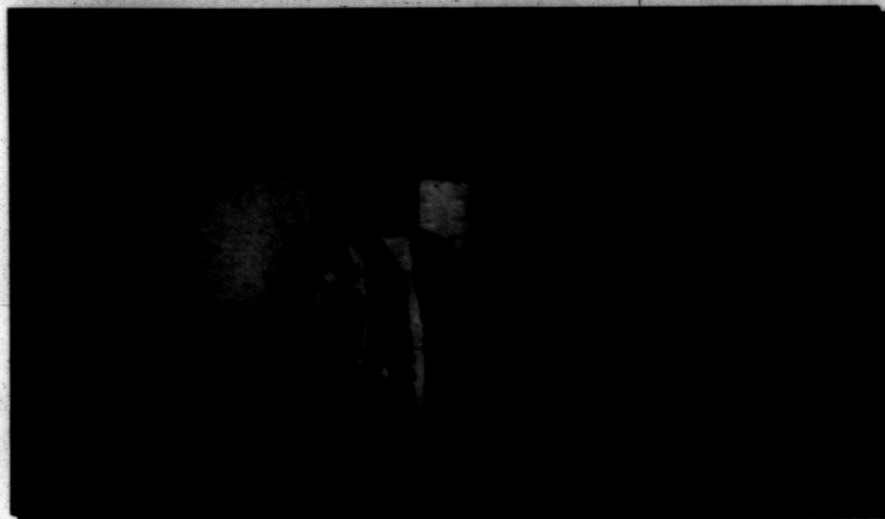
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JUST FOR THE RECORD



6. Perfect Attendance, First Church, Potts Camp



7. Deacon Ordination, First Church, Charleston



8. RAs, Branch Church, Morton



9. Blackard and wife, Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth



10. Wells and Thornhill, Moak's Creek Church, Summit

6. First Church, Potts Camp, presented awards for perfect attendance to Janice Canerdy, one year; Billy McAlexander, 17 years; Madalynne Ash, 18 years; and Lynda McAlexander, 18 years. Shown are the recipients.

7. First Church, Charleston, recently ordained Blane Breland and Ernie Inman as deacons. Shown, standing, is pastor John Price; Breland and Sherry Breland, left; Inman and Sue Inman, right.

8. The RAs of Branch Church, Morton, recently made birthday cards to be sent to Missionary Kids. Shown are the RAs.

9. Kara Blackard recently celebrated 25 years at Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth. The church honored him with a special service, a monetary gift, and a sabbatical. Shown are Blackard and his wife, Linda.

10. Moak's Creek Church, Summit, recognized Myrtis Green Wells, 97, and Iva Mae Brown Thornhill, 94, on Mother's Day. Wells has been an active member of the church for 80 years, and since 1930 Thornhill has played organ and piano for every department in the church at various times.

11. The Children in Action of Parkway Church, Kosciusko, celebrated Christmas in August by collecting items for missionary Trish Alligood from Palmetto, Fla. Shown are the children.

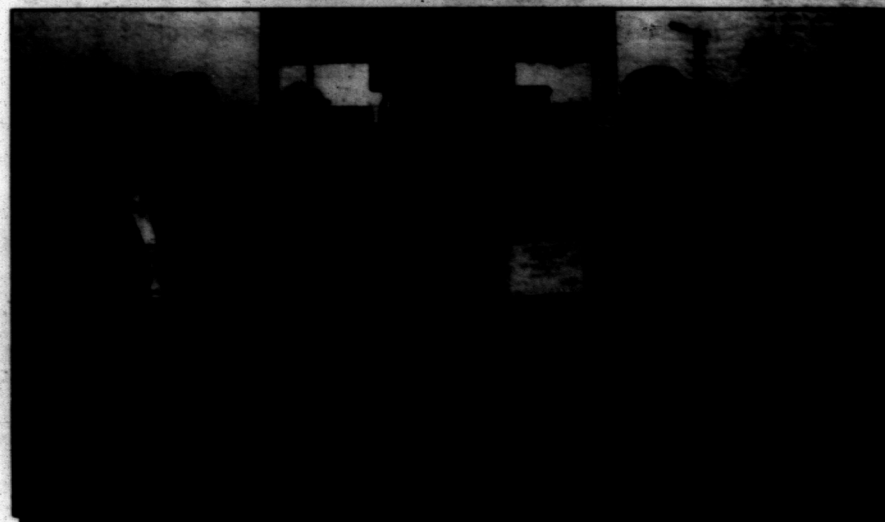
12. Oakvale Church, Lawrence Association, received a certificate from the Mississippi Baptist Historical Society recognizing 100 years of service. Shown are Rachel Jones, Gerald Turnage, Jimmy Hill, Wade Barnes, Mildred Barnes, Peggy Saliba, and pastor Mark Yeatman.

13. Oakland Church, Corinth, recently celebrated the church's 45th anniversary. Brenda Roach, organist, was honored for playing the piano/organ the entire 45 years. She received 45 roses and a diamond necklace from the church.

14. Hebron Church, Vaiden, licensed Mevlyn Hunt as a pianist and gospel singer Oct. 15. Shown are Billy Little and Hunt.



11. Children in Action, Parkway Church, Kosciusko



12. Certificate awarded, Oakvale Church, Lawrence Association



13. Roach Honored, Oakland Church, Corinth



14. Hunt Licensed, Hebron Church, Vaiden

JUST FOR THE RECORD

www.mbc.org



15. Smith Ordained, Calvary Church, Vicksburg

15. Trey Smith was licensed to the ministry by Calvary Church, Vicksburg, July 23, and is available for pulpit supply. Shown are pastor Macon Phillips and Smith.

16. Utica Church, Utica, recently recognized Harvey Gray for over 20 years as Sunday School director. Shown are Gray and Eric McMahon, youth and children's minister.



16. Gray Recognized, Utica Church, Utica

17. Whitesand Church, Prentiss, held a note burning ceremony Oct. 1 for the renovation of their sanctuary. Shown are the building and grounds committee, the chairman of deacons, and pastor Charles Burnham.

18. Lake Como Church, Bay Springs, recently held a successful marriage conference. Speakers were Wayne and Tina Hudson of Complete in Christ Ministries. Shown are the Hudsons.

19. Hope Church, Philadelphia, held a recognition service for their Acteens, RAs, and GAs. Shown, back row, are youth minister Jacob Glasz, Carrie McLemore, and Julie Osborne; second row, Graham Winstead, Paul White, Ali Pike, and Brianna Whittle; front row, Jonathan Osborne, Clair Winstead, and Bethany Whittle.

20. Lake Como Church, Bay Springs, recognizes its Bible Buddies and Bible drillers. Shown are the participants.

21. The Acteens of Slayden Church, Slayden received baby gifts for the Sav-a-Life organization. Shown delivering gifts to the Oxford home are Nealy Jones, Michelle Russell, Sonia Hurdle, Geraldine Williams, Megan Plowman, and Katherine Boling.

22. Several churches in Tishomingo Association collected pennies for the Memorial to the Missing. By May 13, approximately \$3000 was collected. Church representatives shown are, front row: Robbie Crane, Mickey Trammel, Bob Purvis, Bobby Cobb; back row: Samantha Wright, Jo Broyles, Stanley Magill, Jerry Ginn, and Kim Leonard. Many more churches gave who do not have representatives in the photo.



19. Recognition Service, Hope Church, Philadelphia



20. Bible Buddies, Lake Como Church, Bay Springs



17. Noteburning Ceremony, Whitesand Church, Prentiss



21. Acteens, Slayden Church, Slayden

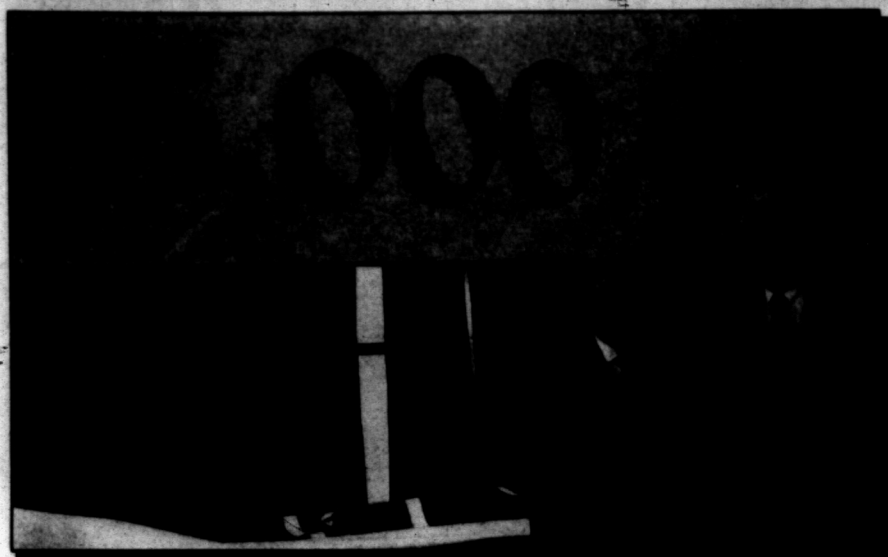


18. Marriage Conference, Lake Como Church, Bay Springs



22. Penny Collection, Tishomingo Association

COLLEGE NEWS



Campaign Projects Highlighted, MC

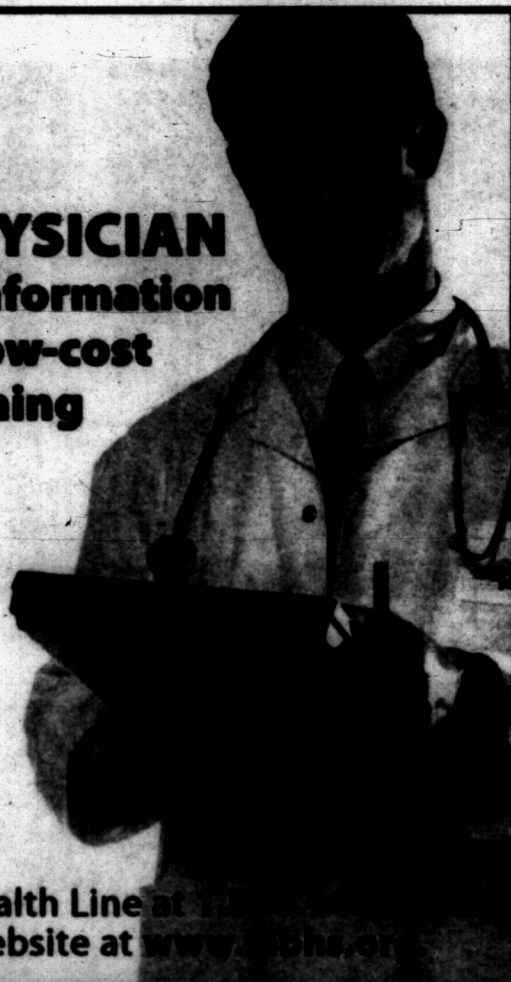
Mississippi College Homecoming 2006 was highlighted by the announcement of the kickoff of the \$65,000,000 campaign. The campaign projects are: capital projects, operational support, and to raise the Endowment Fund. Pictured from left: President of Mississippi College, Lee Royce, and Don Phillips, chairman of the Steering Committee, Growing the Vision capital campaign.



Thompson honored, WCU

William Carey University visiting lecturer of sociology Wilson L. Thompson received a 2006 Mississippi Humanities Council Teacher Award. A banquet will be held in Jackson in February honoring one humanities faculty member from each institution of higher learning in the state.

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REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Bethel Church, Aberdeen: 130th Homecoming, Nov. 5; services, 10 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch and singing; Still Blessed, music.

Big Creek Church, Big Creek: Revival, Nov. 5-8; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Kerry Nelson, speaker; Bill Bailey, music; Chris Conlee, pastor.

Border Springs Church, Caledonia: Homecoming, Nov. 19; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish luncheon; Bobby Cobb, speaker; Glen Edmonds, pastor.

Emmanuel Church, Walnut Grove: Revival, Nov. 12-15; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Steve Moore, speaker; Paul Jordan, pastor.

Evansville Church, Coldwater: Homecoming, Nov. 12, 10 a.m.; Ken Pegram, speaker.

Fellowship Church, Taylorsville: Revival, Nov. 12-15; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.

worship 11 a.m., followed by meal and afternoon service; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Richard Clark, speaker; Charles Yelverton, music; Carey Bass, interim pastor.

First Church, Terry: Revival, Nov. 5-8; Sun., worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Don Taylor, Conehatta, speaker; Jeff Cannon, Terry, music.

Harrisville Church, Harrisville: Revival, Nov. 12-15; Sun., 10 a.m., followed by lunch and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jerry Mixon, speaker; Ronnie Cottingham, music; David E. Sartin, pastor.

Magee's Creek Church, Jayess: Revival, Nov. 5-10; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, Forrest, speaker; Todd McDaniel, Brookhaven, music; Jimmy Jones, pastor.

New Hope Church, Simpson County: Homecoming and 125th anniversary, Nov. 5; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon services; Born Again, music.

STATE CHANGES



1. Thompson and wife, Branch Church, Morton



3. Simmons and wife, Hebron Church, Grenada

1. Branch Church, Morton, has called Kevin Thompson as pastor, who began service Sept. 2. He is shown here with his wife, Kim.

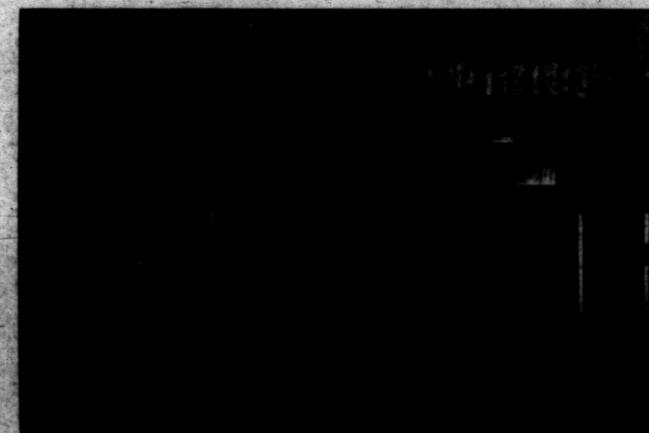
2. Raymond A. Wilson is retiring after pastoring Grace Church, Casa Grande, Az., for 20 years. Wilson is a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary, and pastored in McComb, Mendenhall, and Greenville before moving to Arizona in 1973. He is retiring after 42 years in ministry.

3. Harold W. Simmons retired from 10 years of ministry at Hebron Church, Grenada. He and his wife Shirley were honored by a reception at the church Sept. 30.

4. Gatesville Church, Crystal Springs, has called Harold McLendon as pastor effective Oct. 2. Shown are McLendon and his wife Geri.

5. Philip Cooper has been called as pastor to First Church, Piedmont, Ala., effective Oct. 8. He previously served as interim minister of education at First Church, Richland.

6. Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa, has called Todd Bowen as pastor after serving 18 years at Friendship Church, Aberdeen, effective Nov. 5.



4. McLendon and wife, Gatesville Church, Crystal Springs



6. Bowen and Family, Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa



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A CULTURE OF ALCOHOL

By Jimmy Porter



"By this newspaper's count, 16 Ole Miss students have died in unnatural tragedies since May, 2004," stated Patsy Brumfield, news editor of the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal. She further noted in her October 26 article entitled "This time, a tragic death may spur Ole Miss into action," that "alcohol was a factor in at least four of these deaths. And they don't include the death of Laura Trepdahl in 2003, on her way from a peaceful sleep in her dorm to pick up friends who had drunk too much to drive."

These tragedies, along with other events, has caused the leadership in the city of Oxford and the University of Mississippi to address a culture that is often referred to as "a culture of alcohol." The problems created by underage drinking, binge drinking, and lax law enforcement are shared by every college and university campus and town, not just Oxford and Ole Miss.

A "culture of alcohol" exists in a community when the norms of that community are relaxed to the point that it becomes acceptable and "in" to drink often and excessively. Often the community is in denial and very little is done to curb or prohibit such practices.

The term "alcohol culture" has been associated with binge drinking for over a decade. Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks in a row for a boy and four or more drinks in a row for a girl.

Despite laws in every state that make it illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase or possess alcohol, young people admit that alcohol is easy to obtain and that many high school and college students drink with one goal in mind and that is to get drunk (American Academy of Pediatrics).

Studies reveal that drinking by college students contributes to 1,400 student deaths, 500,000 injuries, and 70,000 cases of sexual assaults or date rapes each year. Dr. Ralph Hingson, professor at Boston University of Public Health, said, "The harm that college students do to themselves and others as a result of excessive drinking exceeds what many could have expected. Our data clearly point to the need for better intervention against high-risk drinking in this population" (www.alcoholism.about.com/cs/college).

According to the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study, nearly half of all college students surveyed drank four or five drinks in one sitting within the previous two weeks. Students who live in a fraternity or sorority house are the heaviest drinkers—86 percent of fraternity residents and 80 percent of sorority residents report binge drinking (www.ncadi.samhsa.gov). College students currently spend \$5.5 billion a year on alcohol, more than they spend on textbooks, soft drinks, tea, milk, juice, and coffee combined.

Problems with alcohol are easy to identify, document, and discuss but real solutions are harder to come by. A single group or a single law will not change the abuses of excessive drinking in college towns and universities. But the situation is not hopeless when

responsible leaders recognize that a problem does exist and they take measures to address the situation.

What should trouble us is that the data collected by research groups represents real people, individuals who have died, or who have their lives ruined forever because of alcohol. Signs that say "Drink Responsibly" or "Don't Drink and Drive" are not working. Everyone is responsible for their choices, but our culture must and should be one that encourages sensible decisions.

What can we as Christians and Baptists do to help with the problems inherent in a culture of alcohol? First, we can pray for the administration of our colleges and universities as they seek solutions to their problems. Second, if you are a former student or a resident of one of these college or university towns, write a letter to the administration and to your elected officials expressing to them your opinions and a willingness to be a part of the solution instead of the problem. Also, cooperate with and give support to the local authorities as they seek to enforce the laws that are already on the books. Finally, make sure you tell your children and grandchildren that they don't have to drink alcohol to have fun or to be sociable. You can carry on a conversation without a drink your hand. Tragedies happen and will continue every single day, but if we learn from them and then act upon what we learn, then all is not lost.

Jimmy Porter is executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.

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"Normal" people are broke.

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ROMANS 12:2

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



23. Survival Kits, Enon Church, Walthall County

23. Enon Church, Walthall County, recognizes new believers who have completed the Survival Kit for New Christians. Shown are interim pastor David Millican, leaders, and children.

24. Neely Church, New Albany, recently licensed Timothy Eric Murrah to the ministry. Shown are Murrah and pastor Kenny Adair. Adair and his wife Lavene Adair were also recognized for 15 years of service.



24. Recognition and Licensing, Neely Church, New Albany



25. The WMU of Cash Church, Scott Association, crocheted 20 baby afghans for the Crisis Pregnancy Center, Forest. Shown are Leslie White, Tiffany Gunn, Clara Pope, Claudia Weaver, Marasol Brewer, Joyce Maze, Rachel Dolle, Marie Rhinewalt, Betty Gunn, and Betty Weaver.

26. Lakeland Church, Mantachie recognizes their RAs and GAs. Shown are the children.

27. Park Haven Church, Laurel, recognized Jimmy Downs and Jimmy Leggett Oct. 1 for one year of perfect attendance in Sunday School. Shown are Downs, Billie Ishee, and Leggett.

28. Cross Road Church, Pelahatchie, recently celebrated its 90th anniversary with seven former pastors among the guests. Shown, front row, are Vic Bowman, Bobby Smith, Wayne Crenshaw and L.C. Anthony; second row, Guy Hughes, David Rives, R.C. Rice, and Brian Hill; third row, Dennis Basden, Aaron Reynolds, and John Vaughn.

29. First Church, Calhoun City, ordained Jon Caranna to the ministry Sept. 28. Caranna currently serves as minister of students and recreation. Shown are David Tuten, Caranna, and Bobbi Caranna.

30. Several area churches sponsored the Power Team at the Marshall County Fairgrounds, Holly Springs. Seventy people received Christ as Savior and 90 publicly rededicated their lives to Christ. Shown are Power Team member Riley Israel and workers from First Church, Potts Camp.

31. The Mission Friends of Branch Church, Morton, participated in Mission Friends Day in September. Shown are Zachary Irby, Avery Gordon, Wyatt Lampkin, and Vaden Latham.



28. 90th Anniversary, Cross Road Church, Pelahatchie



29. Caranna Ordained, First Church, Calhoun City



30. Power Team Members, First Church, Potts Camp



31. Mission Friends, Branch Church, Morton



26. RAs and GAs, Lakeland Church, Mantachie



27. Perfect Attendance, Park Haven Church, Laurel



FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Live in Relationship, Not Rebellion

Isaiah 1:1-31

By Arthur Story

What difference does it matter if a person has a right relationship with God? For the lost person the immediate answer to this question deals with eternity. Without a relationship with God through Christ one is destined to an eternity separated from Him in torment. For the Christian the question has daily implications. A broken relationship hinders experiencing the abundant life to which we are called and it hinders us in our usefulness to God. A right relationship with God gives us the ability to live life with a godly perspective, enjoy Him, and faithfully serve Him.

In Isaiah 1:2-4, the prophet Isaiah stands before the people

as if he was a prosecutor in a courtroom and brings a pointed charge from God against His people. The people can only sit and listen to the irrefutable evidence being brought against them the same way a guilty defendant would in a courtroom. What had God's people done? They had rebelled against Him by engaging in evil (verses 2 and 4). The casual observer would have thought all was well in Judah. Outwardly everything seemed to be prospering but inwardly God's people were eroding away. As Isaiah points out, they had done what animals would not. They had rebelled against their master (verse 3). God's children were being disobedient.

Story

ent. These words from Isaiah should come to each of us as a word of caution. Simply being saved is not enough. You can't come to Christ and then constantly rebel against God. Sadly, America seems to be filled with individual believers and churches that are taking the path of rebellion. Isaiah brings a troubling word to God's people as he continues on with God's charge in verses 10-15. He informs the people in an earth shattering manner that their ritualistic worship is worthless to God. Isaiah connects the people of God to their patriarchal moorings by identifying them with Sodom and Gomorrah (verse 10). They knew that these two cities had been utterly destroyed by God because of their wickedness and they had just heard that God was not blind to their own sins of rebellion. Before the power of these

words had time to really sink in, they heard that their sacrifices and worship were nothing but a burden to God (verse 14). The relational element inherent in the sacrifices and worship had been replaced by the ritual of the worship. As a result, the people were able to engage in a form of worship and sacrifice without seeing their need to change their behavior. Our worship and service to God should be built on a growing relationship with God and not based on ritual.

The encouraging part of Isaiah's charge to God's people comes in verses 16-20. In a courtroom this would be similar to the sentencing. Fortunately, God is not prosecuting the people as a judge but rather correcting as a loving Father. Instead of a punitive judgment the people hear of the potential for restoration. In essence they receive a deferred sentence. They should be disciplined for their rebellion and if they do not relent God informs them that they will be

disciplined (verse 20). In the interim, they receive grace and are given the opportunity to repent of their rebellion and return to a restored relationship with Him. What steps are necessary for the people to be restored to a right relationship with God? They need to repent and seek God's forgiveness (verse 16), stop engaging in evil (verse 16), get into His Word (verse 17), and live out their commitment to Him by seeking what is right according to God (verse 17). This is yet another caution for us today. We need to invite God to search our hearts and reveal our sin so that we can repent of rebellious attitudes and actions in order to follow Him in every aspect of life.

Yes, it does matter if a person has a right relationship with God. For the lost person it's a matter of eternity. For the Christian it's a matter of abundant, useful living.

Story is Minister of Education, First Church, Louisville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Exercise Confidence

Hebrews 10:19-36, 39

By Cyndi Grace

Two of my favorite scenes in The Passion of the Christ were the crushing of the serpent's head and the tearing away of the veil in the temple for these illustrate the fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis 3:15 to redeem His creation. As the Old Covenant was replaced by the New Covenant through Christ's blood, the removal of the veil in the temple allowed believers to be able to enter the Holy of Holies for the first time ... so why don't we? Many times we behave as if we prefer our worship to be "old covenant-like" — through a pastor during a religious meeting. Entering "the sanctuary" (vs. 19) requires a personal and private commitment and com-

plete honesty; it causes us to face a Holy God and realize we can no longer live our lives in the status quo. Entering the sanctuary indicates clearly who we are compared to a Holy God and that a change must take place. In Isaiah 6, that change came by confession or "being cleaned from an evil conscience." (Hebrews 10:22) Confession is the beginning of our worship because by it God can cleanse and empower us to do the work of the kingdom and do it with confidence.

Perhaps we fear if we actually faced our shortcomings, He will not be forgiving, a common satanic ploy. The writer of Hebrews states the only time God is not willing to forgive is when one chooses to deliberately sin against God's

Grace

truth. For those who discover the truth and then reject Christ's offer of salvation, there is no hope. This word sin in our text doesn't mean our everyday failures but a warning given to Jewish Christians who were tempted to reject Christ for Judaism. It applies to anyone who turns away from Christ to another religion or, having understood Christ's atoning work, deliberately turns away from it. The majority in the church do not fall into this category and therefore should boldly and without fear enter the sanctuary; there God will meet, cleanse, and empower us. (1 John 1:9)

There is a price to pay, however, for faithfully following God; we will not be the most popular people on our worldly block! Standing for Christ is not always politically correct as we proclaim a life of biblical holiness and purity to a world loving compromise. There will be struggles. (vs.32) Christians in

other countries have already faced persecution by the loss of jobs, family, property or even their very lives. Christians in the United States are ridiculed and at times forbidden to express our view point but an even greater persecution is coming. Will we stand strong in the midst of it? The writer of Hebrews encouraged those early Christians facing persecution to remember what was at stake (vs. 34) and his words sound loudly to us today; even in persecution, we can remain confident of God's faithfulness.

We can examine a long list of Biblical heroes who discovered God was more than faithful. Remember the lives of Daniel and Nehemiah—two young men who choose to stand firm in the midst of less than perfect surroundings. Both were prisoners under a pagan rule but stood firm in the truth of God and both were given great opportunities to make a marked difference in their world. Yes, God was faithful. But God will not always bring earthly honor when you stand for Him. Many

have been martyred for the cause of Christ. The first martyr, Stephen, was stoned for preaching the truth. Had God let Stephen down? Hardly! The Bible says as he was dying he looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:54-56.) Jesus was standing to receive him into his eternal place of rest and reward. Not drawing back when times get hard brings rewards. God proved faithful to these three; that should encourage confidence in His faithfulness to us!

The Hebrews were cautioned to not throw away their confidence and to enter the sanctuary "boldly." What is it that you are fearing or uneasy about? Are you about to give up? Are you at the end of your rope? Where does your faith need strengthening? God already knows about it and is waiting in His sanctuary; waiting and wanting you to bring it to Him. All you need to do is enter boldly and He will do the rest!

Grace is a women's conference speaker and women's ministry director at Highland Church, Vicksburg.

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted.

Record

Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to crop-

ping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

LifeWay charts attitudes of 'formerly churched'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — While a great deal of effort is made to attract new church members, LifeWay Research's newest study surveys the "formerly churched" to better understand why people drop out of congregational life.

In the summer of 2006, the research arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, surveyed 469 formerly churched adults — those who regularly attended a Protestant church as an adult in the past but no longer do so. In addition to better understanding why people stop attending church, the survey also sought to better understand what it would take to bring them back.

The results indicate that, while some losses may be inevitable, opportunities abound for churches to hold on to members who are headed for the door.

According to the study, 59% of formerly churched adults left their church because of "changes in life situation." While this may suggest that most losses are outside of the church's control, the research indicates that is not necessarily the case, said Brad Waggoner, director of LifeWay Research.

Waggoner noted that the formerly churched provided more detailed reasons behind this more generic changes in life situation description. "It is interesting that the most prevalent reasons come down to personal priorities rather than an external change in the person's life," Waggoner said.

behind, the large percent of the formerly churched who struggle with disenchantment deserve some honest attention," Waggoner said.

Notably, Waggoner pointed out that only two of the top 10 reasons are instances in which the formerly churched admit to spiritual causes, citing "church was not helping me to develop spiritually" (14%) and "stopped believing in organized religion" (14%).

The latter reflects creeping secularism and is underscored by the number of respondents who consider themselves "spiritual, but not religious" (24%) and "Christian, but not particularly devout" (42%). Less than one in five formerly churched adults confess to being "a devout Christian with a strong belief in God" (19%) and a somewhat smaller number are wavering on Christianity (10%) or belief in God at all (six percent).

Clearly, many of the reasons people no longer regularly attend church are interrelated. More than 80% of the formerly churched do not have a strong belief in God, perhaps explaining, for example, why work and family are a higher priority than church — but would they be "too busy" to attend if they felt more welcome at church?

Although many formerly churched adults stay away from their former church for the same reasons they initially left, some indicate that the church did not notice or care. Sixteen percent said "nobody contacted me after I left" and another 16% said "nobody seemed to care that I left."

Waggoner noted that "the responsibility and influence of the church varies across the different reasons for withdrawal. One clear influence is the expectations that churches have of attendees as they come into the life of the church." Quoting the book, *Transforming Discipleship* by Greg Ogden, Waggoner said some church practices might be contributing to low levels of church commitment and limited biblical knowledge.

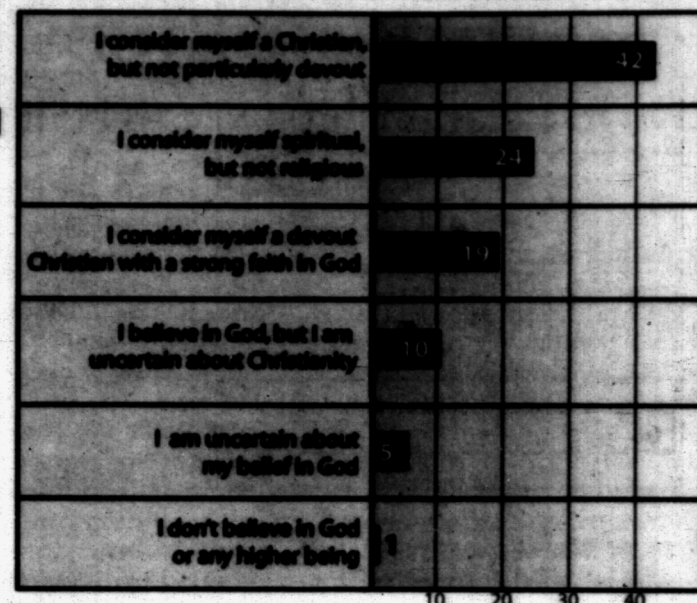
"Christian leaders seem to be reluctant to [proclaim] the terms of discipleship that Jesus laid out," Ogden writes. "What are the reasons for our reluctance? We are afraid that if we ask too much, people will stop coming to our churches. Our operating assumption is that people will flee to the nearby entertainment church if we ask them to give too much of themselves. So we start with a low bar and try to entice people by increments of commitment, hoping that we can raise the bar imperceptibly to the ultimate destination of discipleship."

Waggoner said it appears that some of the formerly churched left because the "destination" was so slow to emerge. "In the end, it's important for church leaders to not only assume responsibility for those who seek to join their churches, but also

Current beliefs about God among the formerly churched

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Note: Because survey respondents could "check all reasons that apply," the total answers sum more than 100%.



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for those who attempt to leave. Be vigilant at both the front door and the back door of the church."

There is some good news in that area. The LifeWay research shows that more than two-thirds of formerly churched adults are open to the idea of attending church regularly again.

"We were delighted to see such a large percentage of the formerly churched willing to consider church again in the future," said Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research. "This was particularly surprising because the average formerly churched adult has not attended regularly for 14 years."

Four percent of formerly churched adults are actively looking for a church to attend regularly (other than their previous church). Six percent would prefer to resume attending regularly in the same church they had attended. The largest group (62%) is not actively looking but is open to the idea of attending church regularly again.

McConnell noted that such openness may reflect a cultural Christianity rather than genuine interest, but the fact remains that the majority are not closed to the idea. "The small portion who are 'unlikely to consider' returning (28%) should be encouraging when you think about the three out of four who are willing to give it another try," McConnell said.

For some, the openness to returning is a real yearning for what they once had at church. More than a third are motivated to consider returning in order "to fill a gap felt since stopping regular church attendance" (34%). Despite multiple reasons for leaving that often include their own life changes as well as disappointing action or inaction of the church, a

number of the formerly churched miss the benefits of attending church.

The most common motivation of those who would consider returning comes straight from the soul: "to bring me closer to God" [46%]. Not surprisingly, this desire for an improved relationship with God is expressed primarily by those who still consider themselves Christian.

"Many members are vulnerable to attrition because of either a nonexistent or immature faith," said Waggoner. "When individuals begin to seek out membership, they should be guided through a process whereby they are clearly taught the Gospel and then, following salvation, grounded in strong biblical truth. Far fewer people would drop out of church if their spiritual foundation was deep and strong. The church also must be sensitive to this combination of a less developed but genuine desire for faith as they approach the formerly churched about returning."

Building relationships in a Christian community is another strong motivator to return to church. Thirty-two percent of those surveyed want to "be around those with similar values" and 31 percent would consider returning "to make friends." A similar number would return "to make a difference/help others" (30%) in their community.

"Too often churches wait for people to be spiritually mature to engage them in service when many projects or tasks are ideal entry or re-entry points for people on their faith journey," McConnell said.

"Clearly we can encourage Christians to pray that the unchurched would sense God calling them back, but God works through His people," McConnell said. "The survey showed that many would respond to an invitation from a friend."

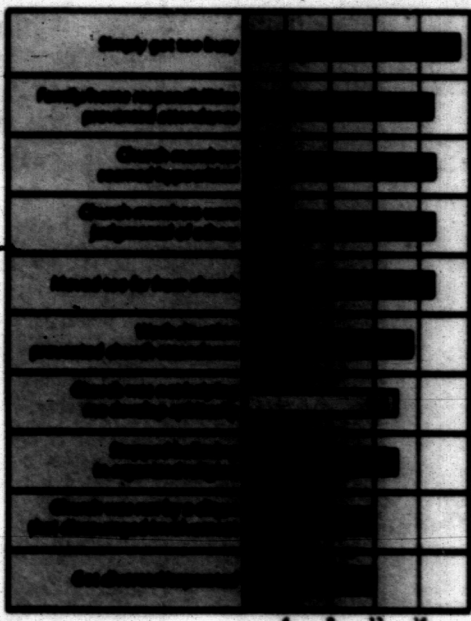
Top ten specific reasons for no longer attending church

Category

- Changes in life situation
- Disenchantment with pastor/church
- Church not fulfilling needs/reasons for regular attendance
- Changes in beliefs/interests/attitudes toward church

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Note: Because survey respondents could "check all reasons that apply," the total answers sum more than 100%.



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In looking at the top two life-situation reasons adults stop attending — "simply got too busy to attend church" (19%) and "family/home responsibilities prevented church attendance" (17%) — such reasons are more preventable than some of the lower-ranking reasons such as "moved too far from church" (17%), "work situation" (15%) or "got divorced/separated" (12%).

The second most common category of reasons why adults leave the church is "disenchantment with pastor/church," accounting for the withdrawal of 37% of the formerly churched. Three specific sources of disenchantment are sandwiched among the life-change reasons. The formerly churched say church members "seemed hypocritical" (17%), "were judgmental of others" (17%) or "the church was run by a clique that discouraged involvement" (12%), indicating that the leadership and relational dynamics of a church can be obstacles that prevent involvement.

"While some may use disenchantment issues as a smokescreen to hide

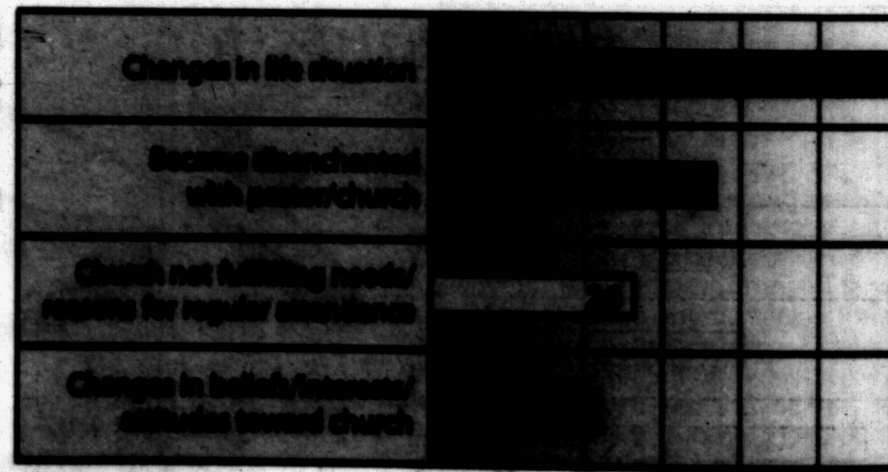
out," Ogden writes. "What are the reasons for our reluctance? We are afraid that if we ask too much, people will stop coming to our churches. Our operating assumption is that people will flee to the nearby entertainment church if we ask them to give too much of themselves. So we start with a low bar and try to entice people by increments of commitment, hoping that we can raise the bar imperceptibly to the ultimate destination of discipleship."

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Top four general reasons for no longer attending church

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Note: Because survey respondents could "check all reasons that apply," the total answers sum more than 100%.



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